

A

LETTER

From one in the Country, to his Friend in
the City : In Relation to their Distres-
ses occasioned by the doubtful and pre-
vailing Practice of the

Inoculation

OF THE

SMALLPOX.

Printed for, and Sold by *Nicholas Boone*, at the
BIBLE in *Cornhill, Boston*. And *John Ed-
wards*, at the Corner of *Kings-Street*. 1721.

To my Friend in the City.

S I R,

IN Answer to your Request, I have spent some thoughts upon the Subject of our last Conversation, *viz:* Inoculation, which has caused so many idle words, and angry Discourses; to say no more of 'em. And first, as to the practice in it self consider'd. I must confess, I am not Master of Philosophy enough to enable me to determine for or against the use of it, upon natural reasons: But as fools use to do, must wait till experience does more fully instruct me. But then Secondly, as to the Manner of introducing, and carrying on the practice here in this Country; if I have the truth of the fact, (which I confess 'tis difficult to come at in this day, to our shame it will be spoken) I can but condemn it upon the following reasons; which I offer by way of Query, and submit them to your and the Worlds Consideration and Censure. The fact I take to be this: A certain *Clergy-man* (by the way of *Europe*) received Advice of the Practice among the *Mussel-men*, & faithful people of the prophet *Mahomet*; also more immediately and *viva voce* from some of the scattered Members of the good people in *Guinea*, who communicated it to the Physicians in your Town; one of whom (without consent of his Brethren) introduces the

the Practice here in the midst of a populous Town, soon after, (if not before) the Guards which were placed by Authority at the doors of Infected Houses, (to prevent the carrying out any Infection) were taken off ; when there was at least a possibility that the spreading of the Distemper might be prevented. Now against this, I offer to your Consideration.

I. Whether this Practice was not an offence against the Civil Government, and contrary to the Peace & Quiet of His Majesties Liege People ?

How daringly bold this Practice ? for one single Apothecary, without consent of his Brethren, without asking the Civil Power, without consent of the Neighbours ; yea, against their Fears, their Cries and Clamours, to infect his Family, with a Disease very Mortal and very Contagious ! The late riotous wicked disturbance, shews the dangerous consequence of such rash practices. I mention not this in the least to excuse that horrid fact ; No, I detest it as much as any man, and pray God deliver us from such a Spirit. But I think that *Inoculation* as it was firstly practised, carried in it as much threatening and danger ; yet being done with a good and charitable intention, & without design of mischief to any man, did not render the Actor so criminal. To spread a mortal Contagion, What is it but to cast abroad Arrows and Death ? If a man should wilfully throw a Bomb into a Town, burn a House, or kill a man, ought he not to die ? so if a man

should wilfully bring Infection from a person sick of a deadly and contagious Disease, into a place of Health; is not the mischief as great? Suppose that *Inoculation* is to all those that use it very safe and beneficial, that it answers all the desired ends upon them; yet how can they answer it, to hazard the destruction of their Neighbours, who are not of their opinion, and dare not practice it! Suppose then again (as we reasonably may) that of those many who are lately slain by the *Small-pox*, some few have taken it by their *Inoculated* Neighbours, who might otherwise have escaped it. How shall we excuse our *Mahometan* Missionaries, from being truly, tho' not designedly the cause of their death? If any persons are satisfied, that this Practice is a good method to save them from the dangers of a mortal Disease which threatens them; I do not say they ought not to use it, but they ought to use it in such a manner, as may be with Surety to their Neighbours as well as themselves. If men therefore will have such practices, must they not make them lawful, and withdraw from the Community into such places where there can be no danger to their Neighbours, or else obtain a common consent

2. *Whether as the Practice has been carried on, there has not been offered horrid Impiety against Almighty God?*

I do not see how we can be excused from great Impiety herein, (altho' the Doctors bold practice was consecrated by the Authority of
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five or six Reverend Subscribers to a certain Writing, devised for that purpose at the time) when Ministers and People, with loud & strong Cries made Supplications to Almighty God, to avert the Judgment of the *Small-pox* (professing their faith in his Power and Goodness) that though in the ordinary view of men it must spread, yet that it would please him (if it might be agreeable to the ends of his Holiness) to Exert his Almighty Power, and be better to us than our tears, in preventing the further spreading of the Distemper, as in his Mercies he had heretofore done. And at the same time, some have been carrying about instruments of *Inoculation*, and bottles of the poisonous Humour to Infect all those who were willing to submit to it, whereby we might as naturally expect the Infection to spread, as a man to break his bones, by casting himself head-long from the highest Pinnacle. Can any man infect a Family in a Town in the Morning, and pray to God in the Evening, that the Distemper may not spread ? No, it is a Temptation from the Devil : for it is written, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*. No more can any man that have promoted it make this prayer without sin. Now then suppose that to avoid Sin, they have omitted this prayer ; is it a right thing to omit it ? Is not the *Small-pox* a sore Judgment of God ? and should we not then pray, *Deliver us from Evil* ? Yes, but then it may be said, that tho' the *Small-pox* as God sends it in the com-

mon course of his Providence be a sore Judgment, yet by this invention of *Inoculation*, it becomes much lighter ; and tho' we don't pray that it may not spread, yet by praying for a blessing on this practice, we pray against the Judgment. This is indeed the best face that can be put upon it, in my opinion ; and in this dress if we view it well, it has an horrible aspect ; and I wish it don't in the end prove a Fighting as well as praying against the Judgments of God. Are we not all one Church of Christ, and People of God ? and shall we divide in our Supplications to God, and think to be heard of him ? One part praying & confessing, *Lord we have Sinned, and are afraid of thy Judgments which are out against us ; say unto thy destroying Angel, it is enough, stay now thine hand ; and Lord, if it be thy holy Will, let not this sore Disease spread further among us !* And another part praying, *Lord, we have Sinned, & thy Judgments are upon us in sore Sickness ; but we have (by thy Providence) found out a way to lighten it, give us thy blessing upon it, & then let it spread, the faster the better ; no danger of death this way, and but little sickness ; and let us have the benefit of this Invention, tho' others of thy people that are so blind they will not see the benefit of it, are ever so much endangered by it.* These last words sound a little harsh, but is it not the true language of the practice ? Thus we are brought into a state of War, Sin and Contention in our very prayers, by carrying on this practice in such a lawless, un-

guarded

guarded manner ; and did the Gentlemen that promoted it ever think of any regulation ? I am sure they never effected it, which ought to have been the very first step in a matter of such concernment to a people. Now as these things have an evil aspect in themselves, is it not evident, that they have so in their effects & consequences ? Instead of being humbled under the holy hand of God in this Judgment upon us, and treating one another with meekness & charity, are we not filled with contentions, and every wicked work ? I pray God grant us Repentance, lest despising the Chastening of the Almighty, we provoke him to bring yet sorer Plagues upon us.

Sir.

You see that at present I am neither Inoculator nor Anti-inoculator, considering it only in a Physical sence : But I must condemn upon the foregoing reasons, such a rash managing a matter of so great concern, without advice or Caution which in my opinion is a great Contempt to God and Man. That which moved me to Answer you just at this time is, the fear that I and my Neighbours are in, for our selves and Families. We are advised that the Practice of *Inoculation* is carrying on in our Country Towns, which (if it proceed) will undoubtedly infect and endanger the Lives of vast numbers more than otherwise would be : I mean of such as are not to be *Inoculated*. The *Small pox* thro' Gods Goodness has not been wont to spread generally in our Country Towns ; but a Family here and there has been visited. But now, if this Practice obtain among us, suppose but

a few, say a Twentieth part of a Town take up with it, living in the several Quarters of the Town : It will undoubtedly infect the whole. I know some will say, they may all be *Inoculated*, its an Excellent way ; They will be safe in the use of it, and ever after out of Danger. But generally People are not perswaded of either the expediency or Lawfulness of the Practice ; and if some are, shall they in this manner force it upon others ? Is it so pleasant and beneficial, that 'tis better to undergo it than not, where we may by the blessing of God upon a proper care be in little danger ? For my part, when I see this Sword of the Almighty in the Angels hand, I tremble, & am afraid of his Judgments ? But let him wield his own weapons ; & if he slay me, *yet will I trust in him.* But when I hear of *Quacks* boldly meddling with these edged tools, in such a rash and lawless manner ; (tho' the hand of God is to be seen in this also,) yet it raises other resentments in me. And it is amazing to me, that the worthy Members of our General Assembly, my Country Neighbours (who start from their business, looking pale with fear by the danger of this Distemper) should not spend one thought upon this practice, which will render their danger a thousand to one greater. And now after all, to their Consideration we must leave it, hoping in their care and wisdom this matter may be brought under some regulation ; That if they allow it, there may be proper Pest Houses in solitary places, to receive those that have a mind thus voluntarily to infect themselves, with severe penalties on those that shall dare to do otherwise, to the endangering the lives of their honest Neighbours ; or else to banish the Practice to the *Turks* and *Pagans*, whence it came ; and if ever they allow it in such an unguarded manner as we have done, I dare to be bound to be *Inoculated.* Dear *Francis*, I bid thee heartily Farewel.

F I N I S.